United Nations A/ES-10/796–S/2018/782

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
24 September 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Tenth emergency special session
Agenda item 5
Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Identical letters dated 24 August 2018 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council

The situation in the Occupied State of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, remains extremely volatile as Israel, the occupying Power, persists with its violations of international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, causing the continued deterioration of the situation in all aspects, including the continued suffering of the Palestinian people under its occupation, and further deepening despair and inflaming tensions.

Last week, Israel, the occupying Power, continued with its vicious killing of unarmed, defenceless Palestinian civilians participating in the "Great March of Return" to protest the systematic violation of their human rights, to demand an end to Israeli occupation, siege and dispossession and to call for independence, freedom and the return to their ancestral lands. The total number of Palestinians killed since the March began on 30 March has reached 164, including 23 children.

Moreover, on 10 August, Israeli forces fatally wounded three Palestinian protesters, including Palestinian volunteer medic Abdallah al-Qatati, age 22, as he was treating an injured protester, Ali Said al-Aloul, age 55, who was also shot and killed. Abdallah, like the two other Palestinian medics killed by Israel since the beginning of the Great March of Return protests, was wearing clothes clearly identifying him as medical personnel.

This latest war crime follows a series of attacks by Israeli occupying forces targeting health-care personnel and equipment. Between 30 March and 17 August, three health workers were killed and scores were injured by Israeli attacks and a number of ambulances were damaged. Scores of severely injured Palestinians were refused permits to leave the Strip, where medical supplies and facilities are at a breaking point, for treatment in the West Bank or abroad. This led the World Health Organization to reiterate once again its call for the protection of health workers, patients and health facilities in Gaza.

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On 10 August, Israeli forces also injured 300 civilians, including 8 by live ammunition, bringing the total number of Palestinians wounded and injured throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory to more than 18,000 since the protests began. Moreover, on 13 August, Wissam Yousif Hijazi, age 30, died from injuries he had sustained on 14 May, the bloodiest day yet since the start of the Great March of Return.

It is clear from successive declarations and statements by Israeli government and military officials that, to Israel, Palestinian lives do not matter. Israeli officials have been using inflammatory rhetoric and incitement against peaceful Palestinian protesters since and prior to the start of the Great March of Return, threatening to treat protesters as legitimate targets, including with use of live fire.

Among other incendiary and racist remarks, on 13 August, Israeli War Minister Avigdor Lieberman made the outlandish and fallacious claim that every Palestinian killed by Israel in Gaza since 13 March was a "militant", echoing his previous statement that "there are no innocent people in the Gaza Strip".

All such declarations and comments constitute admission of deliberate, planned and institutionalized intent to violate international law, at the highest levels of command in Israel, the occupying Power. In the face of such increasing rhetoric and incitement, it is high time for the international community to consider these facts and act accordingly, in line with international law, including international humanitarian and human rights law, rather than fall prey once more to Israel's propaganda.

In this regard, we once again recall that Palestinian protests against Israeli oppression are not new and constitute a popular initiative. Palestinians have been protesting the unbearable conditions they have been facing, not only since 30 March, but for the past 70 years. They have been protesting in Gaza, but also in all the rest of historic Palestine, as well as in the refugee camps and in the Diaspora. Palestinians, like any other fellow human beings, are people who cannot endure decades of violent oppression, domination and control by the Israeli occupation forces without at least voicing their opposition to this in a peaceful protest. It is not strange, but rather normal, that Palestinians would rise up to protest the unbearable conditions in which they have been forced to live.

In addition to the violence and permanent subjugation of millions of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel through the occupation, blockade and continuous acts of State terrorism against innocent civilians, the same War Minister declared Israel's intent to inflict further violence on Gaza, stating that "the question of the next round is not a question of 'if' but of 'when'" and that "residents of Gaza will be among those who will have to pay the price".

It is thus of particular urgency that the international community act quickly to prevent further assaults against Palestinian civilians. We call upon the international community to publicly condemn Israel's latest killings of Palestinian civilians and all of its previous deliberate killings and maiming of health-care personnel, journalists and unarmed protesters in Gaza, and to ensure that Israel be held accountable for its crimes under international law by prosecuting Israeli officials who have ordered unlawful lethal force as a matter of universal jurisdiction or in international judicial forums.

Israel's brutal actions against the Palestinian civilian population, including the ones mentioned above, provide further evidence that urgent and immediate measures must be taken to protect the defenceless Palestinians. In this regard, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of the Palestinian civilian population (A/ES-10/794) of 14 August 2018. The report is currently being studied, and wide-

ranging consultations are under way as we prepare for the next steps forward to ensure that the observations listed in the report are adequately followed up.

Moreover, we reiterate that Israeli domestic investigations are wholly inadequate. The latest example of Israel's unwillingness to genuinely investigate its crimes against the Palestinian people is its decision, on 15 August, to close a military investigation into its savage military assault on Gaza on 1 August 2014, in which 135 Palestinians were killed deliberately and in cold blood. Once again, the Israeli military cleared itself of wrongdoing, claiming that there was no reason to suspect any criminal misconduct.

Against this backdrop of criminal activity in Gaza, Israel, the occupying Power, has persisted with its deliberate, systematic and gross violations in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. This includes the continuation of its colonial settlement enterprise, implemented through, inter alia, the demolition of Palestinian homes and structures, the confiscation of Palestinian land, the forcible transfer of Palestinian families and communities, the construction of settlements and transfer of its citizens thereto, the encouragement and condoning of settler violence and terror, the fragmentation of the Occupied Palestinian territory through segregated roads, checkpoints and the illegal Wall, the raiding of schools and the constant attacks on Palestinian holy sites. Just this week, the occupying Power announced that it was advancing plans to build over 1,000 new settlement units in the occupied West Bank. Moreover, according to the Israeli non-governmental organization, Peace Now, the occupying Power is intending in the near future to promote hundreds more settlement units by issuing tenders and is promoting a future plan for more than 300 units in the illegal settlement of "Beit El".

In addition to Israel's systematic suffocation of the Palestinian people and the isolation of Palestinian communities into separate enclaves, the occupying Power has been preventing Palestinians from contact with the outside world, including through the simplest form — the reception of mail. For eight years, 10 tons of letters and packages, including gifts, medicine, letters and even a wheelchair, were prevented by Israel from reaching Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and were only allowed into the subjugated territory on 15 August. Naturally, much of this mail is damaged and can no longer be delivered.

There is also a continuing trend of arbitrary arrest and obstruction of the freedom of expression and of the press. In the month of July alone, Israeli occupying forces arrested 520 Palestinians, including 69 children, 9 women and 5 journalists. On 15 August, Palestinian journalist Ali Dar Ali, a reporter for Palestine television, was arrested during a raid on his home town of Burham following his live streaming of two videos showing Israeli occupying forces operating in a refugee camp near Ramallah. Dar Ali is one among seven Palestinian journalists who have been arrested in the span of two weeks as part of Israel's crackdown on members of the press in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem.

Israel's systematic and deliberate campaign of subjugating, terrorizing, dispossessing, silencing and isolating innocent Palestinians is part and parcel of its overall colonial and ethnic cleansing campaign that seeks to superimpose all of "Greater Israel" on all of historic Palestine and eradicate any hopes of return for Palestine refugees.

In this regard, we once again condemn in the strongest terms the so-called "nation-state law" passed by the Israeli Knesset on 19 July 2018, which explicitly endorses apartheid and ethnic discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel and Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. On 12 August, tens of thousands of Palestinian citizens of Israel, joined by Israeli Jews, led a mass protest in Tel Aviv calling for the cancellation of this so-called law and all other racist legislation enacted by the Israeli

Knesset, revealing day by day and ever more explicitly the State's fundamentally anti-democratic character. In response to these protests, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu instead reaffirmed his commitment to apartheid, stating: "Now it is clearer than ever that the nation-state law is also necessary."

Despite the continuous oppression faced by the Palestinian people, we remain committed to justice, to human dignity and to the conviction that peaceful means and international legality will lead to an end to our suffering. We appeal once again to the international community, including the Security Council, to encourage us in these efforts and ensure respect for international law by compelling Israel to bring its decades-long illegal occupation, siege, oppression and dispossession of the Palestinian people to an end.

We also appeal to all States to continue their vital humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people, especially during the medical emergency in Gaza with the health sector at the brink of collapse, and to increase their support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 645 previous letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the territory of the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 10 August 2018 (A/ES-10/793-S/2018/766), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed by Israel, the occupying Power, against the Palestinian people since September 2000. For all of these war crimes, acts of State terrorism and systematic human rights violations being committed against the Palestinian people, Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer
of the State of Palestine to the United Nations